

In the News

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Message from the Mayor

Few things are more important to me than the safety of the District of Columbia's citizens. That's why my administration is working tirelessly to improve our city's public safety by proposing an increase in the number of police officers in the District.

During my mayoral campaign last fall, and in my inaugural address in January, I made a commitment to improving public safety—to improve visibility and responsiveness, solve crimes and work hand in hand with community groups and businesses. My speech was not just idle chatter. I'm making a serious commitment to help our Metropolitan Police Department achieve its goals for public safety.

For the first time, the FY 2004 budget allows for a department build-up to 3,800 officers by September 2004. This means more police officers in neighborhoods patrolling the streets—more officers working with the community to solve and prevent crime. Our plan also gives officers the tools and technology they need to investigate, respond to, and prevent crime. While DC Councilmembers and I disagree on this issue, I think it's one that's paramount to the success of our city.

The Metropolitan Police Department's proposed operating budget for FY 2004 is approximately \$379 million from all funding sources. This represents an increase of approximately \$58 million from the department's approved budget for FY 2003, or an increase of 18 percent.

As I've made clear before, my 2004 proposed budget is a public safety budget. In public safety, my budget proposal funds three key initiatives:

- Increased police patrols and strengthened community policing
- Reduced 911 response times
- Emergency preparedness buildup

Five years ago, the Metropolitan Police Department had trouble securing even basic supplies for its officers. Now, MPD Chief Charles Ramsey is nationally-recognized for the incredible work he does, and we have come a very long way. Now we need to provide the basic funds needed to continue improving. That's what my budget does, and citizens need to speak out so those on the DC Council who want to cut the police budget will hear your concerns.

However, it takes more than police to make our neighborhoods safer. It takes police, city agencies, and citizens working together. That was the theme of Crime Forum I last January—and we will build on that concept at Crime Forum II on May 10. This year's budget and the proposed FY 2004 budget support "civilianization," professionalism, and improved technology for our 911 emergency call center. The FY 2004 budget will allow us to fill 37 of the civilian vacancies that exist in the department, including 16 locally funded positions in the Public Safety Communications Center.

In the end, one of the most crucial aspects of public safety is citizen input. I like to say that government can't do it alone. Well, in the case of public safety, that statement increases one hundred-fold. Citizen input is crucial to solve crimes and to stop crime before it happens. We need citizens to attend Patrol Service Area meetings ... join citizen patrols ... and become part of neighborhood problem-solving teams. The MPD is spearheading these efforts; but they need citizens to climb aboard. It's a group effort, and I know that together we can dramatically improve public safety in our magnificent city.

Reminder: On Saturday May 10, I will host a follow-up to my January 25 forum on crime and crime prevention. Crime Forum II will feature an interactive town hall meeting with Chief Ramsey on community programs that empower citizens to help reduce crime. Break-out sessions for the seven police districts will allow residents to learn about community policing in their neighborhoods. For more information, citizens may call the Office of Community Outreach at (202) 442-8150.



AGENCY WEBSITES

[Office of Tax and Revenue](#)

[Department of Parks and Recreation](#)

[Department of Employment Services](#)

[Metropolitan Police Department](#)

[Office of Boards and Commissions](#)

[Commission on the Arts and Humanities](#)

Community Profiles

Darren Wiggins

Ward 1 resident Darren Wiggins believes “the only way we can continue to grow as a community is to give back in our own way.” His volunteer history is extensive, from literacy tutoring with jail inmates to volunteering with Food and Friends. He was also an advocate for children through the CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) program. Currently, Darren gives back to his community as a volunteer tutor two nights a week for the Maya Angelou Public Charter School's (PCS) evening study hall program.

Students at the Maya Angelou PCS are African-American youths between the ages of 14 and 19. Many of them have been involved in the juvenile justice system. During any given week, more than 270 volunteers come to the Maya Angelou PCS to work directly with students in the evening tutoring program. The first challenge volunteer tutors face at the school is earning the students' trust. Darren overcame this barrier and has formed strong relationships with the two students he works with in the program.



Darren Wiggins

“Whereas most of our tutors and students rush out the door when evening tutoring is over, Darren doesn't leave until his student's work is complete,” said Aarti Shastry, Tutor Coordinator at the Maya Angelou PCS. “Darren has been successful in creating a space in which the students he works with feel safe and appreciated.”

Darren is the March adult winner of the Mayor's Community Service Award, sponsored by the DC Commission on National and Community Service. Thanks, Darren, for your excellent service to our community!

“Keight” Bloeser

Katherine Bloeser, or “Keight” as she is known to friends, works to touch souls, build lives, and create leaders through her volunteer work. “Volunteering for me is not about giving, but it is a learning experience,” Keight said. “Volunteer work is a reciprocal activity.”

Keight has worked with young children through the Heads Up/AmeriCorps program, advised the Community of Hope Homeless Shelter, helped with sign-up for DC Healthy Families, and volunteered for Hands On DC. Meanwhile, she holds two jobs and is a full-time student at George Washington University. She is majoring in Public Policy with a minor in Human Services. A resident of Ward 2, Keight plans to attend Catholic University this fall in pursuit of a master's degree in Social Work.

“She has a visible passion for making a difference in other people's lives,” said Jason Reimer, Program Coordinator for YMCA Youth and Government, where Keight also volunteered as the Assistant Program Coordinator for the YMCA's First Annual DC Youth and Government Program. Through the program, she trained 20 site coordinators who have worked in District high schools to prepare students for the Youth and Government Conference.

During high school, Keight served as the Youth Governor in the New Jersey YMCA Youth and Government program. It became a life-changing event for her, and now she has the opportunity to bring this program to students who have never had such opportunities. The program politically empowers young people in the District by teaching them civic participation, public speaking, servant-leadership, and a stronger sense of confidence.

Katherine is the March youth winner of the Mayor's Community Service Award, sponsored by the DC Commission on National and Community Service. If you would like to nominate a youth or an adult for the monthly award, visit <http://cncs.dc.gov> for nomination information or call (202) 727-9461.



LINK TO OTHER WEBSITES

[DC Agenda](#)

[Hands on DC](#)

[DC Convention and Tourism](#)

[DC Public Library](#)

Voting Rights Take Center Stage

On April 15, I was proud to sign legislation sponsored by Councilmember Jack Evans (Ward 2) making the District of Columbia's presidential primary the earliest in the nation—ahead of even New Hampshire. During a signing ceremony at Freedom Plaza, I joined councilmembers and Ilir Zherka, Executive Director of DC Vote, to proclaim April 15 "DC Voting Rights Day."

As our citizens well know, the District of Columbia has good reason to make its presidential primary first-in-the-nation. I believe we should play a leading role in the nominating process for our country's future presidents. While doing so, this is the perfect way to bring attention to our quest for full voting rights.

As District of Columbia residents, we pay federal taxes and serve to defend our great nation, yet we have no voting rights. This is a grave injustice. Many of our fellow citizens around the United States don't even realize that we don't have a voice in Congress. That's why it's so important to spread the word: we need full congressional voting rights and full self-government. By moving DC's Presidential Primary to first in the nation, we will elevate this discussion to a national level. Presidential candidates will be pressed to address our concerns and offer solutions to rectify this injustice if they want the support of the District's voters and delegates.

The presidential election is our only opportunity to influence and vote in federal elections. Moving the District's primary to first-in-the-nation will bring presidential hopefuls into our diverse neighborhoods where people live, raise families, and have varying political views.

Our city hall, the John A. Wilson Building, stands between the US Capitol and the White House. One of our greatest steps forward as a nation was taken in the US Capitol when Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which finally made it possible for millions of African Americans to exercise their constitutional right to vote and to participate in representative government. Yet citizens who live in the shadow of the US Capitol have been denied representative government for more than 200 years.

From his desk in the White House, President Kennedy declared in his civil rights address that our nation should have no second class citizens and that "this nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free." Yet city residents who live in the shadow of the White House are not fully free. If democracy prevails throughout the rest of our country, then it must prevail in our nation's capital. I ask District citizens to support our first-in-the-nation primary and help spread the word about voting rights.

We need to educate the American people and motivate them to insist that their representatives in Congress ensure 'basic fundamental' rights for all people. The presidential primary is one way of doing that. I look forward to seeing you at the polls in January.



Mayor Williams signs bill authorizing that the District hold the first Presidential primary.

District's New Roadway Operations Patrol

In another demonstration of my commitment to public safety, the District of Columbia Department of Transportation's (DDOT) new Roadway Operations Patrol (ROP) is one of the best things to come down the highway in recent years. This bold and innovative new program can help make traffic in our area more efficient and help keep our motorists safe every day. Initially, the Roadway Operations Patrol team will consist of two patrollers per shift. The ROP team will stage at designated locations such as inbound or outbound on the 14th Street Bridge and the Anacostia Freeway. After peak morning and evening rush hours, patrollers will move to other designated routes.

ROP patrollers will monitor designated routes and respond to the following types of incidents: major/minor crashes, disabled vehicles, hazmat spills, minor debris removal, and abandoned vehicles. Using the latest in radio technology, the mobile and flexible roving ROP team can help us in three important ways:

- Traffic Flow – the team can reduce the time it takes to clear roadway incidents, including accidents, fallen debris, and breakdowns. The ROP van is fully equipped to handle all kinds of situations.
- Air Quality – the team can reduce idling time and delays from accidents and incidents, which helps to reduce air pollution in our city and in our region.
- Safety – the team can stabilize situations quickly to ensure the utmost safety for motorists.

Nationally, 1,000 people were killed last year in work zone accidents. Eighty percent of those killed were motorists. The ROP team will also manage work zones to make them safer and to ease congestion in those areas.

I would like to thank the Federal Highway Administration for making this great program possible through a grant of \$400,000.



Time for a Bike Ride

Spring is here, and there's no better place than the District of Columbia for a bike ride from the Tidal Basin to the Capital Crescent trail to Rock Creek Parkway, our city has much to offer when it comes to cycling.

The writer Mark Twain once said, "Get a bicycle. You will not regret it." He is right!

Here in the District, we are committed to building and sustaining a healthy bike-friendly environment. The District of Columbia is the core of the region and the regional transportation network. In this system, we boast the most developed pedestrian access system, which provides bicycle access as well.

We are making progress in the area of improving our transportation system, which increases the viability of living and working in the District. Here are just a few of the things we've done to become a biker friendly community:

We've installed six miles of new bike lanes in the last year, which gives us a total of eight miles. Our goal is 50 miles over five years. We've installed 200 new bike racks throughout the city. Our goal is 500 over five years.

We're building two new major bike trails in underserved parts of the District: the Anacostia trail along both sides of the Anacostia River from the Potomac to the Maryland border and the Metropolitan Branch Trail from Union Station to Takoma Park. Both will close critical gaps in the regional trail system.

We've funded the installation of bicycle racks on all Metro buses. This allows people to ride and bike further throughout the city. And, we've hired a fulltime bicycle coordinator after a 10-year absence. According to the 2000 census, bicycle commuting trips in our city have increased by 80 percent since 1990.

Every year, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) hosts Bike to Work Day, which this year will be on May 2. Hundreds of bicycle commuters will gather at Freedom Plaza before work. I'm planning to bike to work that day, and I hope many of our citizens can join me.

Finally, we're using bicycling to bring attention to Voting Rights. On June 14 (Flag Day), cyclists will ride their bikes to every state street and avenue in the District in support of DC Voting Rights. We have partnered with WABA on this bike ride. The ride, which starts and ends at Freedom Plaza will touch the 50 state named streets and avenues in the District.

National Youth Service Day

One of my favorite things about being mayor is volunteering for service projects and giving back to my community. Three months ago, I painted the hallways of MacFarland Middle School as part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday of Service. I also shelved books at Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library with First Lady Laura Bush in celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

That's also why I was so pleased to take part in National Youth Service Day ceremony at Orr Elementary School in Southeast on April 11. The 15th annual event was a program of Youth Service America (YSA) in association with the National Youth Leadership Council

At the ceremony, I told the audience that I expect our young people to pledge at least 4,000 hours of service over their lifetimes. This is a direct answer to President George W. Bush's call to service.

The mission of the annual National Youth Service Day is twofold:

- First, it is to mobilize youth to identify and address the needs of their communities through service, while recruiting the next generation of volunteers.
- Second, it is to promote the benefits of youth service to the American public.

National Youth Service Day is a time when youths are recognized as leaders in our community, leaders who can meet community needs through service, and the District of Columbia is committed to meeting the needs of our community through service. The DC Commission on National and Community Service helped mobilize over 6,000 District youths to participate in over 50 community service projects this year.

As the local lead agency, the DC Commission has been working with a broad coalition of community partners to create volunteer and leadership opportunities for our youth. I'm proud of all the work they do for our city.

I am also thrilled to represent a city where thousands of youths volunteered during National Youth Service Day and pleased to know that the youth of the District of Columbia continue to answer Dr. King's call to service.



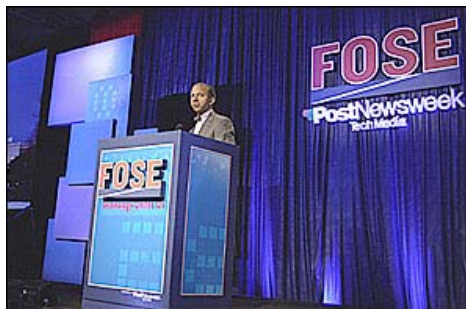
District Activities



On April 8, Mayor Williams joined Bill Marriott (left) and a host of local elected and business officials to cut the ribbon at the new Ritz Carlton Georgetown.



Mayor Williams, with former Mayors Pratt, Washington, and Barry, pays tribute to Mayor Walter Washington.



In his April 9 keynote speech at the FOSE information technology exposition at the new Washington Convention Center, Mayor Williams outlined the Office of the Chief Technology Officer's challenges and successes over the past few years.

Community News

- [Mayor Williams Requests Chief Moose Change Book Title](#)
- [Statement of Mayor Williams on the Death of Lorraine Whitlock](#)
- [Chief Declares "Drug Free Zones" in First and Seventh Districts](#)

[View all News Releases](#)

Upcoming Events

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| 04/14
thru
05/11 | Photography Exhibition "A Day in the Life of Africa"
Union Station Great Hall
15 Massachusetts Avenue, NE |
| 04/28 | Information Fair for Persons with Disabilities
10 am—4 pm
Gallaudet University Kellogg Conference Center
800 Florida Avenue, NE |
| 05/02 | Bike to Work Day 2003
www.waba.org |
| 05/10 | Crime Forum II
8:30 am —1 pm
Scripture Cathedral
810 O Street, NW |
| 05/13 | Townhall Meeting with Asian and Pacific Islander Community
6—8:30 pm
Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library
9th and G Streets, NW |

[View the Mayor's daily schedule](#)

